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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANAA 000243

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [YM](#) [COUNTER](#) [TERRORISM](#)

SUBJECT: ROYG RAID NETS [EXTREMIST](#) SUSPECT MOHAMMED ALI AL-ZAIDI

Classified By: Political/Economic Officer Willeah E. Cato for Reasons 1
.5 (b,d)

1. (U) Begin summary: On Wednesday, January 29th, Yemeni security forces arrested Mohammed Ali Al-Zaidi, a suspect in both the July 27, 2001 kidnapping of German diplomat Rainer Berns and attacks on government institutions in the Marib governorate. Al-Zaidi was wounded during a gunfight with security forces prior to his arrest and is currently under guard at a medical clinic in Marib. End summary.

2. (U) On January 29th Yemeni security forces apprehended Mohammed Ali Al-Zaidi, after a shoot-out in which a Yemeni soldier was killed, another wounded, and both Al-Zaidi and a relative, Ghalib Abdullah Al-Zaidi, were wounded.

3. (U) Al-Zaidi is currently receiving medical treatment at Al-Wasit clinic in Marib under the guard of Yemeni security forces, but, according to the media, the situation on the ground remains "very tense". Reportedly, both the tribes of Jiham and Murad refuse to allow Yemeni authorities to take Al-Zaidi out of Marib, and have threatened to fire on the soldiers if they try to take him by force.

4. (C) Comment: Al-Zaidi is described by numerous publications as a dangerous individual, who has spent time in Afghanistan and organized meetings for extremists. Yemeni security officials and a senior staffer for President Saleh have contacted the Embassy to draw attention to the Zaidi operation as a significant counter-terrorism success. An advisor to Saleh told the DCM that Mohammed Ali Zaidi was considered "one of the most dangerous al-Qaeda elements left in Yemen." The German Embassy also called to clarify Al-Zaidi's position on our most wanted list, and to ask about his background. Al-Zaidi was not, and is not, on any list of individuals wanted by U.S. authorities as far as post is aware. Information available at post indicates Zaidi has had contacts with known al-Qaeda figures, but does not confirm that he himself had been an al-Qaeda operative. Nevertheless, the successful Yemeni raid is an important security success, and signals ROYG resolve to act against extremists. End comment.
MISENHEIMER